
OBSERVATIONS

ON

Venercal Complaints,

LETTER the SECOND.

[Price Six Pence.]

CONFIDENTIAL

OBSEKVATIONS

VERIFICATION



LETTER de SECOND

CONFIDENTIAL

[L'Esprit des Loix]

OBSERVATIONS

ON

VENEREAL COMPLAINTS,

AND ON THE

METHODS

RECOMMENDED FOR THEIR

CURE.

LETTER the SECOND.



LONDON:

Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY in Pall-mall;
and sold by G. HAWKINS in Fleet-street, and
M. COOPER in Pater-noster-row, 1755.

OBSERVATIONS

ON

VENEREAL COMPLAINTS,

AND THE



METHODS

RECOMMENDED FOR THEIR

CURE.

BETTER THE SECOND.

LONDON:

Printed for R. and J. DODD in Pall-mall:
and sold by G. HAWKINS in Fleet-street; and
M. COOPER in Paternoster-row, 1782.

A SECOND

LETTER

TO A
SURGEON.

S I R,

I Shall now, agreeable to your desire, consider some circumstances relating to the treatment of the more malignant species of the venereal disease : and having here no occasion to enter into dispute about the nature of the distemper, I shall confine myself chiefly to some remarks immediately relative to practice. I propose, however, to proceed in some measure upon

B

the

the same plan as before, by examining the opinions of *Turner* and *Astruc*.

The former of these authors sometimes confounds the symptoms of the pox with those of the gonorrhœa, which makes it impracticable to treat the subject with propriety in the order he has placed it: I shall therefore consider some few particulars mention'd by him, without regarding exactly the method in which he has ranged and related them; and, to reduce the subject into as short a compass as possible, I will occasionally speak of *Astruc* under the same articles with *Turner*.

I shall begin with the original symptom of almost all poxes, the chancre. In the cure of this *Dr. Turner* recommends for external use, some of the strongest preparations of mercury, caustic remedies, or a fumigation with cinnabar. If the two first are ever judg'd necessary they should at least be used with great caution,

as



as they may not only give a great deal of unnecessary pain, but in some constitutions may probably bring on such inflammations and such a fluxion of humours on the foreskin, as will much overbalance the benefit that can arise from their use. The pure quicksilver divided in its particles with lard is as good an application as any; nor should the efficacy of externals ever be rely'd upon in real chancrous sores so as to lessen in the least degree our attention to the internal remedies.

The fumigation with cinnabar is highly extolled by Dr. *Turner*, but, I imagine, with partiality or from a misapprehension of its effects. This method has been try'd in our hospitals with great diligence and care, and so little good has arisen from the experiments, that it retains but a very small degree of its former credit. In a few cases it may give a slight check to or possibly occasion a temporary disappearance

of the symptoms, but without at all advancing an establish'd cure.

Astruc's * account of externals is not much different from *Turner's*, except that he makes no mention under this article of the fumigations, tho' in another place † he disapproves their use in general.

The internals recommended by *Turner*, are, as in the gonorrhœa, the strong mercurial purges and vomits. But whatever pretence there may be for giving these in the cure of a gonorrhœa, where some evacuations are allow'd to be proper, it is certainly doing a violence to the constitution which cannot be necessary in the present case. What is the design here of giving mercury? It is to introduce it into the blood, that it may pass in the course of the circulation to the diseased parts, and destroy the venereal poison? If the body is so open as to prevent the patient's being much heated by this

* P. 358. v. 1.

† P. 207.

this very active medicine, 'tis generally sufficient; and this effect, if not produced by the mercury, which it frequently is, may be occasionally procured by the use of some of the mild and cooling purges. Whereas in the other method, instead of admitting the mercurial particles into the course of the circulation, and mixing them with the general mass to destroy the venereal poison, you convey this specific into the body together with a purge to carry it out again; preventing thus the very purpose intended, by confining in a great measure the action of the medicine to the stomach and bowels. By this means you render the use of the mercury extremely uncertain, if not absolutely ineffectual, at the same time that the patient suffers an unnecessary and severe course of purging, which disorders and enervates him for the present, and perhaps fixes a weakness on his constitution more difficult to get rid of than the original disease. What I have observed here of

the cure of chancres, relates to the method recommended by *Turner* when he hopes to effect it without a salivation, for both he and *Astruc* agree in recommending a salivation when the case proves obstinate, or is attended with other venereal disorders.

The next symptom to be consider'd is the bubo or swelling in the groin, which often appears in a confirm'd pox, but is, I believe, more frequently the immediate consequence of a chancre; being generally attended with those kind of ulcers, or happening soon after they have been seemingly tho' imperfectly cured.

There are two ways proposed both by *Turner* and *Astruc* for the cure of the bubo, viz. by dispersion or suppuration. In the first, mercurials are to be given in such a manner as not to salivate, unless the bubo be attended with symptoms of a confirm'd pox, and then a salivation is
to

to be enter'd upon immediately. In the other method, when the tumour is suppurated the matter is to be discharged, the parts are to be treated with proper topics, and mercurials are to be then administer'd nearly in the same manner as before mention'd.

For the dispersion of the tumour, *Turner*, as usual, has recourse to his strong mercurial purges and vomits: *Astruc* rather prefers the preparations of mercury which have no remarkable purging quality, or else uses the mercurial ointment and gives the milder purges. But however preferable the remedies or directions of *Astruc* may be to those of *Turner*, he is certainly not to be justified in the discouragement which he gives to the suppuration of almost every swelling of this kind; it being equally safe, according to his account, * to suppress these critical determinations of nature, unless the maturation

B 4

ration

* P. 330.

ration is so far advanced as to render the dispersion impracticable.

The dispersion of these swellings may undoubtedly be oftentimes undertaken in slight cases, and very large tumours of this kind, when matter is not formed in them, will we daily see dissolve in the course of a salivation; but from the same experience we find that the certainty and safety can by no means be so well warranted, when the swelling is considerable, and the tumour is made to subside by an alternate course of mercury and purging. *Astruc* * tells you indeed, there is no danger that the venereal infection, which he allows is by this means mixed again with the blood, should produce a pox; for tho' the venereal poison should not be corrected by the mercury given in this manner, it will not, he asserts, remain long enough in the blood to infect it, being carry'd off by purging

* P. 332.

purging medicines as fast as it is sent into the blood.

This account you will say appears very fair in theory, and it would be equally consistent with good practice, if we were possess'd of such a purging medicine as had an elective property, and which, instead of working upon the stomach and bowels, could be conveyed into the blood, and draw from the general mass certain poisonous particles, over which it had a particular and determin'd power.

This however not being the case, and as we find that the most violent or continued course of purging has not the least degree of force in subduing the venereal poison, nor has any other use, but as it may either prevent or moderate certain inconveniencies sometimes arising from the mercury, we must look upon the account rather as a pleasing doctrine than a real practical maxim.

Swel-

Swellings in the groin which occur in venereal cases, if they are considerably large, are undoubtedly efforts of nature to throw out the poison from the constitution. So other humours are thrown off by various critical swellings in several parts of the body, and the event in most cases is not unlike in proportion to the malignity of the humour to be discharged. In common swellings which form matter and admit a discharge, the blood is generally cleared from some disease, and the whole mass is probably restored to a sound state: if through a weakness in the constitution this tendency to suppuration is insufficient, or by an imprudent use of large evacuations it is destroyed, fatal symptoms sometimes ensue, or a chronic illness is fixed upon the constitution that is with difficulty removed. Thus in the venereal swellings of the groin, which are at all considerable, if they are allowed to suppurate and are treated with common care,

how

how favourably do they generally terminate? On the other hand, when they are become considerable, and are not suffered to mature nor are dissolved by a salivation, but the cure is attempted by the alternate use of mercury and purging, how often do these tumours either return after a short disappearance? or, what is much worse, how frequently, by the venereal poison being thus absorb'd into the circulation, does the infection show itself in some other symptoms of much worse consequence?

'Tis hardly necessary to take notice of warts or excrescences appearing about the glans, as they have little particular in their manner of treatment. I shall only observe that, as these appearances may subsist where no venereal taint remains, they are sometimes unnecessarily made the objects of terror to the patient.

The

The phymosis and paraphymosis, in regard to their internal treatment, depend so much upon what has been already said, and are so well considered by those who speak of them as operations, that I shall not offer to trouble you on these particulars, but shall pass to the last resource for most of the bad venereal complaints, a salivation.

Turner you find gives an account of the method of salivating by internal means, as well as externally by the use of the mercurial ointment. The first of these he himself disapproves, and that way of raising a regular salivation is now, you are sensible, almost intirely laid aside. Indeed the mercury given internally will in some few instances serve to quicken the effects of the other, but in general, the disposition it has, when given in considerable quantities, to pass suddenly through the bowels without entering into the blood,

blood, the griping pains and the weakness it frequently occasions, and the imperfect manner in which oftentimes the blood is this way impregnated with the mercurial particles, are sufficient reasons to determine which method ought in most cases to be pursued.

Doctor *Turner* proceeds afterwards to give rules concerning the method of salivating by unction, and the means of relieving the symptoms which may happen in the course. In this account he has been pretty circumstantial, and many of his directions may be useful to such as are unexperienced in these processes.

It may seem perhaps too trifling to take notice of the manner of dressing a patient under these circumstances, by wrapping his whole body up in flannels; a method still very much in use; nor is the confinement of the patient to his bed and in a hot room so frequently dispens'd with

as

as it might be. There may undoubtedly be constitutions that will bear this without considerable inconvenience, especially in cold weather, and some few may possibly be benefited by an extraordinary perspiration, as that secretion ought in all to be free and open ; but such a load of flannel covering in every case and on every person alike, does not appear to be well calculated for general practice. So very great a difference in the cloathing from what is common, and the confinement in a hot room and perhaps in bed, must necessarily weaken the patient ; and by heating the body must oftentimes aggravate the painful and inflammatory symptoms. The doctor seems likewise to observe too little difference in the degree of his salivations, having in every case that requires a salivation at all, very little dependence upon any but what we should call a profuse spitting. In many instances it is right to carry that point of security as far as possible ; but as the malignity

lignity of the disease is different in different habits, and the mercury has a much quicker and more powerful effect in some persons than in others, men of experience and reflection must often find it unnecessary to push things to such extremity, and will avoid such a force on the constitution when it can be safely omitted. Upon this head you will consult Dr. Astruc, who gives * a very good account both of the milder and the more severe way of raising a salivation; where you will likewise meet with ingenious explications of some of the effects of mercury, as well as useful directions in conducting these different courses. One cannot however recommend the strict observance of this author's † preparatory course. Every judicious practitioner will, I presume, according to the state of the constitution, direct some gentle evacuations previous to the use of the mercury. As these will empty and cool the body they

* P. 463.

† P. 459.

they will be a likely means to moderate any painful symptoms which may ensue, and the mercury will act with greater freedom in the circulation. To clean and soften the skin by the warm bath will also be proper, in order for the more easy admission of the mercurial particles when the ointment is rub'd upon it; and in some few instances it may be thought expedient to repeat the use of the bath: but you will find in *Astruc* that the work is very far from being finish'd here. Besides bleeding and purging, the patient is to be bathed twice a day if he can bear it, and an hour or more each time: the number of these bathings to be from ten to twenty. He is likewise to take draughts or medicated broths every morning, then bleed and purge again; and in bilious habits bathe once or twice more to allay the heat which this second purging may have occasioned: and all this is not done upon the pretence, as some make it, of

dis-

disposing the mercury to pass afterwards by the skin, but is the usual preparation when you intend a plentiful salivation.

So again in cases where other diseases are complicated with the pox, you are first to attempt the cure of these, and then begin the preparatory course for the other. To give an instance or two. If the patient is subject to an epilepsy, he advises a course of medicines for this complaint, recommending amongst other things some powder made of the skull of a man that has suffer'd a violent death.

If the patient has the scurvy, or is inclinable to it, he would have him take ptisans made with the antiscorbutic roots or herbs, together with boluses composed of medicines adapted to the same intention; also chalybeate water, and a decoction of guaiacum, &c. When the patient has persisted in this method a month or two, and the scorbutic symptoms

C

are

are suppos'd to be lessen'd, he is then to go thro' the common preparatory course for a salivation. But what is to become all this time of the pocky complaints? I am afraid that while you have been trifling about the others, the venereal symptoms have been increasing, and are become more confirm'd and malignant. Yet these preparatory circumstances are what *Astruc* would never have omitted, except in one or two instances that he mentions, and which very rarely happen.

The caution this celebrated author * immediately subjoins to these numerous directions may, I imagine, make most of them unnecessary, that is, to use the mercury sparingly, employing it in small doses and at due distances of time. This, as he himself observes, will probably prevent sudden and violent agitations in the blood which might happen from too free a use of the mercury; and we may add,
it

it is highly probable that not only the venereal symptoms will be hereby effectually relieved, but if you find no amendment of the other complaints, you will at least meet with no considerable interruption from them to your principal intention, the eradicating the venereal disease.

I shall trouble you with only one particular more under this article; and I mention it not only with regard to practice, but to show how apt the most sensible of systematical writers are to run into a detail of circumstances that may serve to dress up their method rather in an agreeable than in a practical manner.

Speaking of the ulcerations of the mouth, * he says, some of them are useless and painful, and ought to be immediately suppress'd and heal'd; others are particularly useful, and ought to be encouraged during the whole course of the salivation.

C 2

These

* P. 468.

These directions are very agreeable in theory, and what every man would wish to put in practice.

The same circumstance would be as desirable in the management of the small-pox. The eruptions about the lips, nostrils, and eye-lashes, may be painful and troublesome, and therefore one would wish to get rid of them. But as in the latter instance it would be either not practicable, or at least unsafe, so in the former it is full as impracticable, and if free from danger might at least be liable to great inconveniences. The method of doing this he informs you is; by touching the ulcers with an arm'd probe dip'd in a styptic or restringent mixture quicken'd with spirit of vitriol, or by using spirit of vitriol alone; washing the ulcers afterwards with something more emollient. The consequence of this might be a great deal of pain to the patient, an inflammation and swelling of the ulcerated parts, and the flow of saliva being interrupted, a swelling
of

of the whole face might ensue and prove extremely disagreeable.

I shall conclude what I have to offer on venereal complaints, by explaining some dissingenuous proceedings in the management of these disorders: a subject I must acknowledge not very agreeable in its own nature, nor very encouraging to enter upon from the success which usually attends it; for whilst credulity affects the minds of some, and unreasonable apprehensions possess the imaginations of others, there will never be wanting artifice to impose upon the weakness of the former, nor knavery to avail itself of the fears of the latter.

There is hardly any disease which furnishes such frequent opportunities for imposition as the venereal disease: not only because disorders of this kind being kept private, male practices are less liable to be exposed than in other cases, nor that the apprehensions of the patient readily re-

ceive the impressions of such delusions, but it happens too that the very remedy for the distemper is favourable to the purposes of imposition.

This will appear evident from considering the different effects of mercury in the common use of it. Thus for instance, when the situation of the patient's affairs make a salivation or even a confinement impracticable, we find, if the mercury acts kindly in the constitution, venereal symptoms of a bad appearance are sometimes cured without much attention to common rules: when a moderate confinement is complied with, or particular care is taken to avoid catching cold, success is still more to be expected; and if the course is pursued till the mouth is made tender without bringing on a regular salivation, the present success as well as the future security may in some instances be greater and more to be relied on. Again, when a salivation is really intended,

we

we very often find that the mercury, instead of affecting the mouth, either occasions no visible alteration in any of the natural secretions, or else exerts its operation on the kidneys, bowels, or skin, increasing the quantity of urine, stools, or perspiration. Upon these occurrences in the common use of this medicine have been founded the various schemes of employing mercury in such a manner, that it should answer the purposes of cure without the inconveniences of a salivation.

With this view some practitioners, after evacuations and bathing, used the mercury in small quantities and at considerable distances of time, till they had employ'd as much or rather more of the medicine than is usually necessary to raise a salivation. As this circulated and mixed with the general mass, it was expected that, by its specific property, it would destroy the venereal poison; and by doing it in this

gradual way, it would not occasion any disturbance in the constitution, nor affect the mouth, as it generally does when used in a more hasty manner. There was the more reason to hope for such an event, from considering that the salivation or spitting was not in itself of service to destroy or carry off the venereal poison, since the mercury used without certain precautions would produce that effect in a person of the most perfect health equally with one of the most diseased constitution. In reality this method would sometimes succeed very well, but was much more frequently liable to the following objections. In some instances the symptoms disappear'd only, without being absolutely cured. In others the symptoms would not even lose their external appearance till a more effectual course was pursued: a salivation would often happen in other cases, in spite of all endeavours to prevent it.

From

From the want of sufficient success in this way, other methods were attempted; and it was hoped that a freer use of the mercury might be allowed without hazard of affecting the mouth, by determining the operation of the medicine to some of the common discharges of the body. Amongst these, the evacuation by purging seems to be the principal. 'Twas asserted that by the alternate use of mercury and purging, the blood might receive all the benefits of the medicine, and the poison as well as the mercury would be carried out of the body by the purging when the remedy had work'd its effect on the venereal infection.

Cures were sometimes made by this means, but many reasons opposed its becoming a general method. As in the preceding instance a salivation would sometimes accidentally supervene or was absolutely necessary to remove the symptoms;

or

or even if the complaints seemed to be cured, the disease was oftentimes only withdrawn from view and not eradicated. Besides these inconveniences, the frequent purging which was thought necessary on these occasions was as disagreeable and troublesome as a sore mouth, and was infinitely more prejudicial to many constitutions by impairing the strength and weakening the digestion: and if you add to these, that the most severe and excruciating cholics were very common consequences of such a course, you will not wonder that this method lost its credit.

Other practitioners imagined, that the intention proposed might be answered by increasing the quantity of perspiration or urine. Upon trial of these means it appeared, that some of the preceding objections, as well as others peculiar to each of them, frustrated the designs of their patrons, who by attempting to bring these different methods into universal practice, deprived

deprived them in some measure of that share of merit which each in particular cases might have preserved.

The chief inducement for the promotion of all these schemes was to remove the grand objection against the use of mercury, its affecting the mouth; a circumstance so desirable, that no wonder it was sought after by the practitioner and encouraged by the patient: nor is it surprising that, for a certain time, speculative men of little experience and the artful adopters of novelties should find plausible reasons to support the propriety of their opinions. Numerous less likely schemes have been formed for the cure of almost every disease. But when men boldly assert that in each of these instances the safety and certainty of the method might be depended upon, and that the truth was confirmed by repeated experience; what shall we say when the facts appear generally otherwise? Shall we impute this
con-

contrariety to the warmth of these people's imagination? to their partiality for a favourite opinion? or may we not venture to think that self-interest had sometimes a prevailing influence? There is the more reason to admit now and then of the latter construction, as these pretences are always accompany'd with the most inviting assurances of the convenience and pleasantness of the method, and an exemption from the disagreeable circumstances which a patient would wish to avoid.

The remarkable power of mercury in subduing the malignity of the venereal disease, will frequently procure success in whatever form this medicine is administered. The least valuable of its preparations will now and then appear to do wonders to those who are unacquainted with its usual effects, and will very likely gain a temporary credit where it is managed with address. Hence partly arose the reputation which, at different times, was bestowed

bestowed on several nostrums of this kind. It appeared, however, afterwards, that most of these were either some of the common preparations disguised, and had only the additional merit of being secrets; or else that the common preparations were mixed with some other ingredient, with a view of determining the operation of the mercury from the mouth to some of the other secretions.

It would be endless to enumerate all the compositions which have been boasted of by quacks, or carelessly recommended by those who ought to have been more cautious in their encomiums. 'Tis sufficient to observe of the once secret compositions, that as most of them became publicly known they lost their credit with their secrecy; and that those which continued secrets, at least such as their proprietors would not allow were discovered, are now scarce ever in use or otherwise heard of but in the list of *Advertisements*.

At

At present therefore the compositions of mercury are confined by men of experience and candour to a very small number. Most of the chemical preparations (except the mercurius calcinatus) differ in little else than in their milder or rougher effects on the stomach and bowels, according to the different combinations of the acid with the quicksilver, without receiving any considerable alteration in the specific property of the mercury; and those compositions which act by gentler means, and are more particularly distinguished as alteratives, are to be chiefly regarded as different methods only of dividing the particles of crude quicksilver, and vary hardly in any thing essential.

As I have hitherto endeavoured to expose such pretences in the management of venereal complaints as appeared to be founded upon a design of imposition, I cannot intirely omit one which has had

its

its share of credit amongst these physical deceptions. The method of cure by diet-drinks has been as much extoll'd by some as the private compositions of pills, &c. have been by others.

The use of diet-drinks was once in repute amongst the generality of practitioners. We find in the history of the different methods of cure which have prevail'd in different ages, that the first use of mercury was very unsuccessful: not from the real inefficacy of the medicine, but from the extreme bad management of it. The unhappy or fatal consequences which ensued, made the remedy look'd upon almost as bad as the disease. In this dilemma other means were sought after. The chief substitutes for mercury were diet-drinks or decoctions of guaiacum, china root or sarsaparilla, which were given in very large quantities a considerable time. The first of these was highly

highly extoll'd, but lost its credit and gave place to the china root. The china root underwent the same fate, and was succeeded by the sarsaparilla, which was recommended likewise for complaints remaining after a course of mercurials; and the same is now in credit for these latter or secondary symptoms. But whatever good effects these compositions may have in the removal of some disorders remaining after a salivation or a course of mercurials, we find, if they are given in such recent cases as admit no doubt of being venereal, that they do not discover any specific power in destroying the infection. This must have appear'd very plainly in the early practice of this disease, for the specific property of these medicines, you may conclude, must be very inconsiderable, since after a diligent and plentiful use of them, practitioners were again obliged to have recourse to their former remedy, mercury, however disagreeable
at

at that time in its effects. The event indeed proved remarkably fortunate, for instead of using the mercury with that imprudence as before, they administer'd it with greater caution; and the more modern improvements in the management of this most valuable medicine have not only fix'd the character of its efficacy, but have render'd the inconveniences that formerly resulted from it comparatively inconsiderable. Diet-drinks are therefore very rarely given now unless on account of some complaints which affect the patient after a course of mercurials; or they are try'd sometimes where the cause of the symptoms is judged to be doubtful. Of the disorders which either remain or soon arise after a salivation, those which most frequently create uneasy apprehensions are slight pains in different parts of the body, and eruptions or unusual appearances on the skin. When these proceed from remains of the venereal taint, they

D

are

are frequently cured not only more easily but more effectually by an alterative course of mercury, than by repeated salivations. But they very often are owing to other causes, however strong a resemblance they may be sometimes thought to have to venereal symptoms.

In regard to the general complaints remaining after a salivation or a plentiful use of mercury, the cause of these is frequently mistaken by the patient, who, after what he has suffer'd, is naturally enough alarm'd at every pain or unusual appearance. It will be found however that the common objects of fear upon these occasions often go away of themselves, when the strength of the patient is restored, and the natural secretions are become regular. This indeed is not always the case: they may, as was before observed, be possibly owing to some slight remains of the venereal taint, or, as is equally agreeable both to reason and experience, they may

may often be justly attributed to other causes. The venereal disease happening in every kind of constitution, as the scrophulous, the gouty, the scorbutic, &c. it must be expected that different circumstances will sometimes necessarily occur from this natural difference in the habit independent of infection. For this reason, disorders which seem'd perhaps originally to have taken their rise from the venereal poison, may, by being mix'd with scrophulous or scorbutic humours, or where other indisposition prevail, be with difficulty quite removed or may be liable to return tho' the infectious taint is absolutely eradicated. In such cases the use of mercury being laid aside, various other means have in different instances been occasionally directed with the desired success: and here the method of giving diet-drinks has been particularly recommended, either alone, or join'd with an antimonial or some other alterative medicine.

Diet-drinks therefore will probably preserve their just degree of credit in particular cases; but this can never justify the practices of some pretenders to nostrums of this sort. These people either being unable to distinguish one disease from another, or, what is more common, availing themselves of the fears and apprehensions of the patient, pretend that their diet-drinks have a peculiar power in destroying the venereal poison, and are not less serviceable in many other diseases. This extensive use of their medicines is artfully enough assumed, as in some of these cases the patients have doubts whether a scorbutic, scrophulous, or venereal taint predominates. In reality we find by multiplied experience, that these pretences, like numerous others of the same stamp, are founded upon deceit, and are carried on with evident marks of imposition.

Astruc gives an account * of the same pretences at *Paris*, and tells us of two quacks who had compositions of this sort, with which they were to cure the pox as well as many other disorders. 'Twas intimated that some very powerful ingredients were added to the common diet-drinks which assisted their efficacy. These fellows, he observes, were countenanced by some considerable people, and they each collected a good deal of money before the medicines and their patrons fell into discredit.

A confirm'd pox may undoubtedly be sometimes cured effectually by diet-drinks. *Astruc* mentions several wherein mercury makes part of the composition, and mercury, as I before*observed, will often prove successful in whatever form it is administered. I question indeed whether in some of the diet-drinks that he describes the

the mercurial particles are really blended with the liquor, tho' in others they certainly may, by means of the mercurial waters, such as the solutions of corrosive sublimate or of quicksilver in spirit of nitre, which *Astruc* mentions * to be the practice amongst the quacks both of *London* and *Paris*. The impropriety of giving mercury in this manner admits of very little dispute, as the effects of the medicine are hereby render'd less certain than in many other forms, and the consequences will often prove dangerous; but the merit of these people consisting in a pretence to some new discovery, they are obliged to deviate from the forms which are usually employ'd, the better to conceal their impositions.

Having attempted thus to show how the purposes of quackery may be answer'd by the powerful effects of mercury and the variety of its operations, and having observ'd

observ'd how much the disposition and the apprehensions of mankind coincide with such designs, it will not appear surprising that men of less honesty than ingenuity should avail themselves of these advantages. It is by no means a matter of wonder that they should adopt the most trifling complaints into the number of venereal disorders, and magnify every real symptom of the disease into a circumstance of the highest importance, when they can thereby answer the double purpose of profit and an occasional reputation.

To carry on these designs with the most advantage, the least breaking of the skin about the private parts, the least pain, knot or fullness about the groins, the slightest discharge or running after strong exercise or debauch, shall be attributed to a venereal cause. In like manner every pain from the alteration of weather, especially if near the parts supposed most liable to be affected, as the nose, shins, &c.

any

any foulness, disagreeable smell or unusual appearances in the urine, must be derived from the same unhappy source. A giddiness or a pain in the head, a lassitude, and eruptions of almost every kind, are deemed venereal: nor can a pimple or wart, unluckily situated, escape being made the objects of dread and horror to the affrighted and deluded patient.

From these and from the numerous other schemes practised in the management of venereal complaints, a variety of misfortunes are necessarily produced. Had the practitioner been as desirous of securing the patient's future welfare, as he was of establishing the character of some favourite theory, the effects of former disorders would not probably have re-appeared. The disease might have been intirely eradicated before it had tainted the whole constitution; nor might the consequences have been felt at a time perhaps when, from some chnage in the patient's situation

tion of life, the distance from proper advice, or other unfavourable circumstances, relief is very difficult to be procured.

On the other hand, if the belief of imaginary complaints had not been encouraged, many might have been freed from the most tormenting apprehensions, instead of being thrown into a settled melancholy, or driven into some act of violence. It would be hardly credible to relate what a number of unhappy persons languish under the most severe anxiety from imaginary symptoms of the pox. There is not in the world a set of people who are so calculated for the objects of imposition as these are. There is but one thing that you find a difficulty of making them believe, and that is, their being free from the disease; and in their pursuit after different advice they seldom fail to find those who will indulge them in their fears, in order to profit themselves of such credulity. Even this deception might be

E

pardon-

pardonable, if the courses which the patient is made to undergo would contribute at all to his peace of mind; but they almost always confirm rather than lessen his unhappiness. A bad state of nerves, or a melancholy disposition, will be little benefited by the use of mercurials; and we oftener find such rash undertakings either quite destroy the patient's life, or serve as a preparation for a mad-house.

I have now gone through what I proposed at the beginning of my first letter. I have endeavoured to point out and explain such particulars in the writers on the venereal disease, as I imagined might lead a man of little experience or too much theory into a perplexed and erroneous practice. I have attempted likewise to clear the subject from many false pretences in the management of this disorder, and have offered some general observations relative to the cure as they occasionally arose.

A mi-

A minute account of other circumstances are to be met with in books that treat of this distemper: a repetition of them here would therefore be tedious and unnecessary.

I am, S I R,

Your most humble Servant,

THO. GATAKER.

Park-place, St. James's,
Dec. 30. 1754.

A circular library stamp from the University of Toronto. The outer ring contains the text "UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO" at the top and "1827" at the bottom. The center features a shield with a book and a lamp, with the year "1827" below it. The stamp is dated "1895" on the right side.



2000

THE GAZETTE

Dec. 30. 1824

